

"TAKING A CHANCE" ONLY SOLUTION OF RAILROAD TRAGEDY

ENGINEER A TRIED AND TRUSTED EMPLOYEE.

Manager Besler, of the Jersey Central, Declares that He Cannot Account for the Failure of Davis to Respond to the Signals of Danger.

Human Fallability, He Says, Is the One Interpretation—Precautions Taken to Prevent the Employment of Engineers Suffering from Color Blindness.

W. G. Besler, Vice-President and General Manager of the Jersey Central Railroad, gave the following statement concerning the wreck to an Evening World reporter to-day:

"There is but one expression that can be used in trying to give any explanation of the wreck last night—that is, human fallability. With the latest signals, both pneumatic and electric, that inventors have devised, and with a straight stretch of tracks for eight miles, it seems utterly inconsistent with human probability that such an accident could happen on a clear night.

"We are entirely at a loss to understand how an engineer under such circumstances could drive his engine into a train ahead. There must have been a lesion of the brain or a momentary lapse of the faculties.

"When I saw Davis in the hospital last night he told me: 'Mr. Besler, I simply saw nothing ahead. That is all that I remember.'

"Now, Davis has been an engineer for the past six years. He is married and lives in Philadelphia. His record shows him to be a straight and honest man, always sober and careful to a fault in handling the throttle."

STALLED TRAIN NOT TO BLAME.

"With all proper signals displayed, every protection against disaster, her engine comes plunging along and drives his engine into the rear of another train that had been stopped because of a minor accident, but which was well within its rights, and which had taken every precaution to protect its passengers and itself.

"What the man had on his mind we don't know. What he was doing, what he was thinking of to plunge headlong into such a wreck, no one can tell.

"The first thing I asked when I got to the wreck was, 'What does Davis say for himself; how does he explain it?'

"The crews told me that he didn't see the flagman. I wanted more than that from him and all I could get was, 'I didn't see. I didn't see.'

"He was mortally wounded at the time and in great pain. With his mind in the condition that it must have been when he made that statement, one cannot place much dependence upon it.

"Davis was not overworked, for the day's labor of an engineer between Jersey City and Philadelphia is only five hours. The train crews on the run have what is called a pool. One-third of the force is composed of Central men and the other two-thirds of Philadelphia and Reading employees. Davis belonged to the latter and was a regular engineer."

NO REASON TO BE WORN OUT.

"Is it not possible that he had filled in as the substitute of other engineers and in consequence was worn out and in no condition to take the road when he did last night?'

"He was a regular engineer, but he could have done that. Assuming that he did, however, and that he was making his second run he would have only been working ten hours, and that would be nothing for a man who had started out fresh in the morning."

"Could he have been color blind unknown to the officials of the company?'

"I hardly think it possible. The Philadelphia and Reading Company is most particular with respect to color blindness or any affection of the eyes. It examines its men every two years and so, in view of that, we must presume that Davis came under the rule, as he had been there for six years."

COULD HE BE COLOR-BLIND?

"Could not color blindness occur suddenly—within a very short period of time?'

"I am not an expert, but I recall experiments made by the Philadelphia and Reading showing that men after a run of 260 miles on one of the fast mail trains were not as acute in sight as they were before beginning the run. In Davis's case, though, this could not apply, for he was just starting out with his eyes supposedly fresh.

"He ran a mile and a half beyond the cautionary signal. That is a green light and had been attending to his business he would have known that the next block would display a danger or obstruction signal of red. His duty was when he saw the cautionary signal to have slowed down and be prepared to stop at the next block, but he kept on going, running three-quarters of a mile beyond that and into the next block, past the danger signal half a mile more, until he brought up against the local.

MCCARTHY COULD NOT SEE DAVIS.

"The fireman, McCarthy, could not know what Davis was doing. The engine that he was what is known as a wide fire-box, with one cab. The engineer occupies the cab and the fireman is back in the pit, and from his injuries must have been at work at his fires, for he is badly scalded."

"What about the statement that the Jersey Central cars are mere eggshells—old wooden things that will collapse at a shock that would not faze an ordinary modern coach?'

"I will answer that by referring you to the patrons of the road. Ask them what kind of cars we provide. The cars in the train that was smashed were good ones and had given satisfactory service. Their frames were not of steel, nor are new ones for which we have just contracted to have them. Steel, to the best of my knowledge, is only being used in the big seventy-foot Pullmans and in heavy coaches of that type."

DOESN'T LIONIZE THE ENGINEER.

"Davis should be given credit for one thing; he stayed at his post to the last," interrupted Chief Counsel De Forest, who had been listening to Mr. Besler.

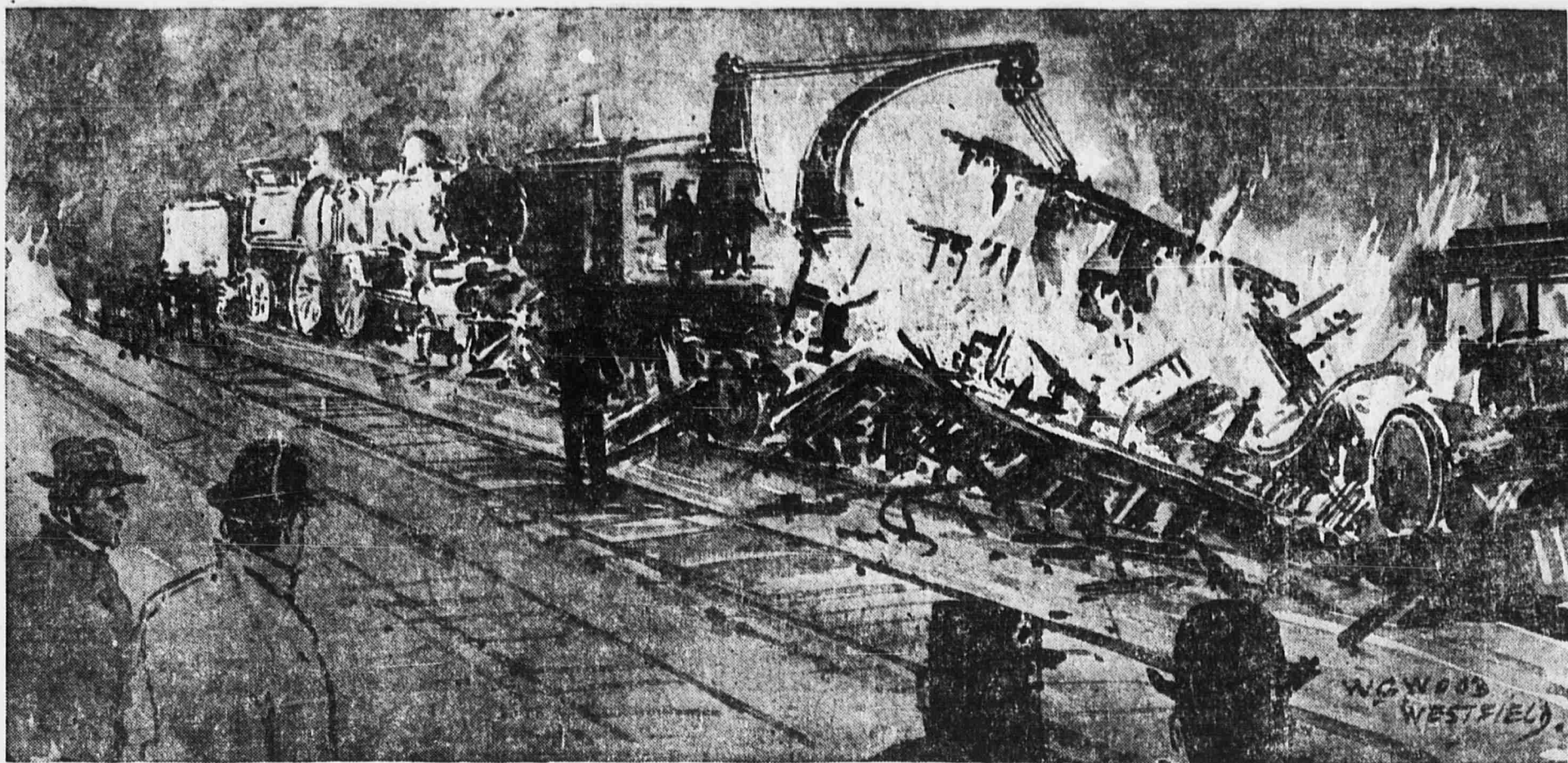
"I don't understand that he did," said the General Manager. "From all I can understand he sustained his injuries by jumping. As to the brakes being applied, passengers say that they heard them put on just a moment before the collision, or as it was occurring, but the breaking of the air and steam pipes would have caused that, too.

"The property loss is not worth talking about. It will not amount to more than \$12,000."

"A wonderful feature of the wreck is the small injury sustained by Davis's engine. It lost only its cab and was pulled back on its wheels, as was the train.

"The east bound train did not kill any one, nor do any damage. That is the one that passed the smash-up a moment after it occurred. That this

BURNING WRECK OF PHILADELPHIA FLYER AND BOUND BROOK TRAIN, IN WHICH TWENTY WERE KILLED AND FIFTY HURT AT WESTFIELD, N.J.



is true is shown by the fact that it has but a few scratches on the sides of its cars."

DOUBTS GRAND JURY REPORT.

"What about the charge alleged to have been made a year ago by the Monmouth Grand Jury, with reference to an accident at Belmar, to the effect that the Jersey Central was not modern, was old-fashioned and should be improved?'

"That accident occurred on another road," said Mr. De Forest. "We simply run our trains over it, but nevertheless I do not believe the jury made that report."

"The Jersey Central," resumed Mr. Besler, "wouldn't think of putting out trains or equipment that was not safe. It would not be good policy and it would not pay. Our equipment is first class in every respect. It is true we have cars that were not built this year but we keep our stock up to a good standard and the moment anything gets to a point where its usefulness is ended we retire it immediately.

"Only three coaches were damaged in this wreck, and that and the injury to the engine's cab comprise the total damage. As I said, it's not worth talking about.

"In conclusion I wish to say that I'll stack up the employees of this road against any in the world for efficiency, judgment and for a knowledge—and a working one, too—of all that a modern railroad man should have at his fingers' ends."

RAILROAD OFFICIALS MAKE FULL INQUIRY INTO WRECK.

The officials of the Jersey Central and Philadelphia and Reading Railroads, headed by Vice-President and General Manager W. G. Besler, are deep in the investigation started last night shortly after the wreck at Westfield to shed as much light as they possibly can on the causes of the disaster, if any besides Engineer Davis's carelessness or failure to obey signals were responsible.

Every employee who had anything to do with the despatching of the two trains that were in the smash-up, the members of their crews, yardmen and switchmen who could possibly have any knowledge of the circumstances is being examined individually in the Jersey City offices of the company. The statements thus far made agree practically with what is already known, and should anything develop to change it General Manager Besler promises to give it out at once.

"I want the public to know," he said, "that we want to find out all there is to be found out about the wreck. We are not doing anything secretly, and we court any information from outsiders that may help us in our work.

"Davis has been quoted as saying that he did see the lights and ran past them, thinking everything was all right. He didn't make such a statement to any of the railroad's representatives. He told a man whom I sent to him that he didn't see any signal at all; that he didn't remember seeing any lights.

"There is a possibility that the blow-off from the cylinders may have obscured the lights as he ran past. That doesn't seem satisfactory though, for Davis was an old engineer. He knew where the signals were, and it doesn't seem likely that he would take the chance of running by them without looking carefully for their lights—it would be suicide."

FOUR MORE VICTIMS IN HOSPITAL CANNOT LIVE.

Distressing scenes multiplied by the hour at the Muhlenberg Hospital in Plainfield since the news of the wreck was spread about the neighboring hamlets, and hardly a moment passed that some grief-stricken wife or parent didn't try to force a way into the hospital to inquire for missing ones.

The staff of doctors and nurses worked unceasingly from the time the first mangled victim of the wreck was brought in until late to-day.

Of the thirteen injured ones brought into the hospital three or four are thought to be beyond human aid. Probably the most terribly injured of them all is John Davis, the engineer of the Philadelphia express. Davis was pinned in his cab under a mass of broken and twisted iron, which fractured the bones of the pelvis and tore great gaping wounds in the flesh about the thigh.

THE ENGINEER'S DREAD PENALTY.

Early to-day the doctors performed an operation on the man, removing some of the crushed and broken bones, thereby relieving him somewhat of the terrible agony he was suffering, though he is not expected to live many hours. The doctors say that his death will be accompanied with excruciating suffering.

R. M. Ising, forty years old, of Westfield, who was taken to the Plainfield Hospital last night suffering from terrible burns about the head and fractured ribs, has been pronounced fatally injured by the physicians.

Frederick Kauze, whose entire body is covered with burns and bruises, has also been given up as beyond aid.

Everett Rughton, of Metuchen, whose right leg was so crushed that it had to be amputated and who was cut and burned about the head and shoulders, has, the doctors say, a bare chance of recovery.

Mrs. Blatch, thirty-four years old, of Westfield, whose arms and right leg were broken and crushed, is not expected to live.

PATHETIC INCIDENTS MARKED THE TRAGEDY.

"I was in a railroad wreck once before and have seen several," said a man who escaped without injury, "but never a worse one than this.

"I helped from the burning cars many who were terribly hurt. All were brave and urged me to aid others who were more seriously hurt.

"One woman whom I helped out pleaded with me to save her husband, who had been sitting with her. He had been instantly killed probably, for just then the body of a dead man was taken out from where I had saved the woman. I was thankful that she did not see it."

Died as He Begged for One Last Look at His Wife, Who Was Being Rescued.

The wreck burned for a quarter of an hour before the first fireman came.

Men and women who were struggling, unhurt, but pinned down on the top of the wreckage, screamed in vain for help to those who were lifting out the first they could reach and who had the heartrending choice of taking those near at hand and leaving those who would require more time to the flames.

One man, about whom the fire was already playing, screamed shrilly to two men who were carrying off a woman who was unconscious:

"That's my wife. Let me look at her. Let me speak to her."

But before their attention could be called to him by those who heard the cry they had carried the woman through the fence and the wreck had lurched inward, carrying the husband with it.

Two Sufferers He Tried to Assist Expired as Mr. Wall's Succor Came.

Mr. Wall, of Westfield, stumbled across the body of a man, both of whose legs were cut off. The man clutched at Mr. Wall's leg and begged him to kill him. Mr. Wall tried to lift him, and as he did so the man died. A moment later he heard screaming from the gully beside the track:

"For God's sake, somebody give me a drink."

Mr. Wall found a man lying there and put a flask at his lips, but before the first drop could pass the sufferer's lips he fell back dead.

"Don't Mind Me," Said a Dying Hero; "See What You Can Do for the Others."

"Don't mind me. I'm done for. See what you can do for some of the others."

While heavy beams were tearing him and flames raging all about him, a man whose identity probably will never be known heroically thought of others whose lives might be saved. The rescuers could not help him, so they turned to others.

The man was taken out half an hour later, burned to a crisp.

EIGHT DEAD IN ANOTHER WRECK.

Two Southern Pacific Passenger Trains Come Together Near Tucson.

TUCSON, Ariz., Jan. 23.—Two Southern Pacific passenger trains collided head on when running at full speed near Yuma, fifteen miles east of Tucson, early to-day. Eleven cars were consumed in a few minutes.

Engineer Bruce and his fireman and Engineer Wilcox were burned to death and another fireman seriously injured. The first known of the collision was the coming of the tourist car, which broke loose from No. 9 and ran down grade to Tucson, where it was captured.

A relief train with medical aid brought seventeen injured to Tucson.

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STREET CARS WRECKED.

Head-On Collision in St. Louis Results in Serious Injuries.

ST. LOUIS, Jan. 23.—During a heavy fog to-day there were several street-car collisions. Within seventy minutes two head-on collisions occurred on the Clayton Division of the Transit Company's lines. Seven men were seriously injured in the two wrecks and a number of others received bruises and scratches.

SEVEN KILLED IN AN ILLINOIS WRECK.

Chicago & Northwestern Fast Express Dashes Full Speed Into a Stock Train.

CHICAGO, Jan. 23.—In a rear-end collision on the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad to-day, at Lafox, Ill., two trains met here to-day. A private car, in which was the body of the late Judge J. F. Fennell, chief counsel of the road, and members of the deceased's family, was attached to the rear of the stock train, killing most of its occupants. The fireman of the passenger train was killed.

FUNERAL TRAIN IN COLLISION

CoMa Broken Open and Three Persons Hurt.

CARO, Ill., Jan. 23.—The Chicago fast passenger train of the Illinois Central met the St. Louis train in a rear-end collision near here to-day. A private car, in which was the body of the late Judge J. F. Fennell, chief counsel of the road, and members of the deceased's family, was attached to the rear of the stock train, killing most of its occupants. The fireman of the passenger train was killed.

The car was partly wrecked, the coffin broken open and the passengers severely shaken. Harry Bruckner, of Chicago, fireman of the Chicago train, and Charles Bryant, a flagman, were severely injured. Mel B. Willard, engineer of the Chicago train, escaped with slight injuries.

A dense fog prevented Willard from seeing the St. Louis train in time to stop. Passengers in the regular coaches were not hurt.

SAVOY HOTEL GUESTS ROBBED

Several Thousand Dollars Worth of Jewelry Stolen by a Bold Thief Who Changed Clothes with His Victim.

BELLBOY PUT UNDER ARREST

Although it is denied at Headquarters, it is a fact that the star men of the Central Office are working their intellects to an unwonted extent in an endeavor to capture a thief who has created consternation in the big Savoy Hotel.

It is reported that the culmination of a series of annoying thefts occurred last night when a guest was robbed in his room of all his jewelry and valuables, worth several thousand dollars, and also a suit of clothes, which the thief wore away, leaving his own habiliments behind.

Denials are made at the hotel that there has been any trouble. But a bell-boy was arrested yesterday, charged with stealing \$300 worth of jewelry from the rooms of a family named Stein and a purse containing \$50 from the room of another guest. The boy was held in custody for six hours and his home was searched, but nothing incriminating was found against him. He was released.

The hotel people, unable to cope with the thieves, reported to headquarters direct, and, inasmuch as Justice Dugro, who owns the hotel, directed his personal attention to the case, the police were extremely busy. Up to date they have not succeeded in finding a single clue.

AMERICANS KILLED FIGHTING INDIANS.

Eight Are Dead in Battle with Yaquis, Who Attacked a Mining Town in Old Mexico.

CANANEA, Mexico, Jan. 23.—The Yaquis attacked the town of San Marcial, the mining centre of the state, and almost taken possession of it.

The defenders of San Marcial against the Yaquis included more than twenty Americans, eight of whom were killed, among them Mr. McAllister, formerly superintendent of the Puerto Blanco mine of this place; Frank Pendleton, formerly foreman of the same mine, and Ed Shutt, and George Carroll.

It is stated there were a number of Americans on the side of the Yaquis.

TO CUT CAR FARES HALF IN NEW YORK.

Assemblyman Fitzpatrick Would Have Five-Cent Round-Trip Tickets for Certain Hours.

(Special to The Evening World.) ALBANY, Jan. 23.—People in New York can ride down to business and back home at night by paying only one fare if a bill offered to-day by Assemblyman Fitzpatrick becomes a law.

The bill requires all surface, elevated and ferry lines to give a return ticket to all persons paying a fare between 5.25 and 7 A. M. the return ticket good between 5 and 6 P. M., a penalty of \$100 being provided for each failure to comply with the law.

FOUR SIGNALS WERE DISPLAYED

Indisputable Evidence that All Possible Mechanical Warnings Were Given to Engineer of the Philadelphia Flyer.

ANY ONE WAS SUFFICIENT.

Despite These and the Flagman, Who Stood Directly in the Way Warning His Red Lamp, Engineer Crashed Into Doomed Train.

Unofficial investigation to-day places the sole blame for the catastrophe upon James H. Davis, engineer of the New Jersey Central express which plunged into and ploughed its way through the local. Whether Davis was drunk or sober, blind or in the possession of his visual powers, may never be known. He is unconscious in the hospital with a fractured pelvis, lacerated and burned, and there is no hope for his life. His fireman, Samuel McCarthy, also escaped immediate death, but is in the same hospital suffering from frightful bruises. He was unable at noon to tell the story of the wreck and so is everybody else who knows the facts about Engineer Davis's condition when he stood at the throttle.

Four Warning Signals.

These facts, however, are indisputable: Davis ran his train at a frightful rate of speed past four warning signals, one within a mile of the scene of the wreck, which would have brought any train to a halt. This was burning brightly at Garwood, and he was permitted to pass running slowly, but he did not check the speed of his train.

The second was opposite the Westfield station. On seeing it he should have brought his train to a stop.

The third was on the block the Duncellen train was stalled on a quarter of a mile west of that point. This was also disregarded.

There are all overhead block signal lights, but they are not the only warnings in the path of the flying express. Two brakemen had been sent back to the Duncellen train, ordered by the Westfield local, which were standing on the fatal block. Just before the accident the Duncellen train called in its rear end man, preparing to start, but the brakeman of the Westfield train was still on duty with the red lantern, two hundred yards behind the train, and near that distance east of the place where the collision occurred.

Signalman at His Post.

There is evidence that this man waved his signal when he saw the express coming, and an eyewitness says that the last possible second, practically trying to check the oncoming express. There is a curve just east of the fatal spot. Davis may have thought both locals were stalled on track No. 1, and that track No. 2, on which he was running, was clear. The night was dark, wet and dismal. All of the lights, however, were visible and he had no right to disregard them.

FAMOUS WOMAN COMPOSER DEAD.

Augusta Holmes, Who Wrote "Hero and Leander," Born in Ireland Fifty-three Years Ago.

PARIS, Jan. 23.—The death of Augusta Holmes, the pianiste and composer of numerous symphonies, including "Hero and Leander," was announced to-day. She was born in Ireland about the year 1850.

When only thirteen years old Augusta Holmes composed a minuet for the regiment Artillerie de la Garde, and the conductor of the orchestra asked her to direct the rehearsals. The first successful composition of Miss Holmes was "Hero and Leander," performed in 1877. Then came "The Argonauts" and "Poland and Ireland." All these were performed at the Paderloup concerts.

A symphonic ode, inspired by the celebrated triplique of Puris de Chavannes, Luau pro Patria, was performed in 1888, and in 1889 the grandest work of her life, a triumphal ode, glorifying France and the Republic, was produced with wonderful success at the Palais de l'Industrie.

Miss Holmes was an indefatigable worker, and for that reason she lived far from the centre of Paris, in Rue Juliette Lamber, near the residence of Mme. Adam. Her home was filled with curious bibelots and objects d'art, brought from all parts of the world. There are many portraits of the composer in the salons, among them one by Jacquet and another by Mile. Huot.

LIKE RIVER OF OIL.

Crude Petroleum on East River Suggests Broken Pipe-Line.

Captains of small craft in the East River were greatly astonished to-day to see large quantities of oil oozing out of the river from Newtown Creek, near Hellgate. It is believed that the oil escaped from one of the big trunk-line pipes of the Standard Oil Company, which may have burst under the creek.

These pipes start from the central station in Pittsburgh, Pa., and run along the Jersey coast across the bay, along the water-front of Long Island from Greenpoint across Newtown Creek to Long Island City.

At the offices of the various refining companies in Long Island City the possibility of the pipes having burst was vehemently denied, but in order to save as much of the escaping oil as possible the employees of the concern frantically heavy blankets from the stores of small rowboats, and after they were saturated with the oil wrung them out into the water.